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ABSTRACT

The dimensions of critical thinking and reading encompass the levels of analysis, reaction, evaluation, and growth in self-image. Historically, the four major views of critical reading have seen it as a cognitive process, a way of detecting propaganda devices, a way of examining distorted and dishonest use of language, and a way of applying the principles of logic to reading. The skills in developing critical reading can be divided into four categories: the application of the principles of logic to language, the evaluation of the tone of language, problem solving, and the development of insight in evaluating language. Some activities that represent the main categories of critical reading include: analyzing and evaluating name calling as a device that influences thinking; analyzing and evaluating the denotations and connotations of words; selecting alternative courses of action and analyzing the consequences of them; and evaluating ways in which reading influences the attitudes, concepts, and behavior of the reader. (IJ)

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APPLYING CRITICAL THINKING/READING SKILLS

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Critical reading may be considered as a continuum from the identification of language patterns to a reorganization of the self image. The dimensions of critical thinking/reading encompass four levels: (1) analysis, (2) reaction, (3) evaluation, and (4) growth in self image.

The first level involves three parts: (1) identification, (2) inference, and (3) implication. At this level, the individual identifies the author's assumptions, the devices to influence thinking, the logical development of ideas, the style or tone of the language, and derives inferences and implications from observations.

The second level, reaction, contains more of the affective response than Gray's third aspect of the reading process (7). The reactor manifests an attitude of questioning or suspended judgment, resisting "efforts that are being made to manipulate his thinking, his purchases, his beliefs, his life" (18:145). Drawing upon his own logic and beliefs, he reacts to each strong viewpoint with a contrasting or opposing view.

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This level "implies an attitude in the reader that helps him to change his beliefs as he reads, but not by accepting totally an author's viewpoint" (18:145)

At the third level, the individual is concerned with the relevancy, veracity, reliability, and validity of statements. Judgment of the worth of ideas is based on sound criteria, external or internal.

The last level of growth is an ongoing process of acquiring "internal monitoring devices" (1:620) by the individual which will guide critical thinking/reading processes independently of the purposes and biases of the authors. Also, the reader is in the process of achieving insight into his personal traits that may distort comprehension. By setting inner criteria developed through previous experiences, the individual grows in making discriminating responses. The fourth level encompasses decision making that can lead to a new or reinforced dimension of self as the discriminating self that has experienced reflective evaluation of ideas for the purpose of making judgments.

HISTORICAL VIEWS OF CRITICAL READING

Historically, there are four major views of critical reading (11). The first view relates critical thinking and critical reading as cognitive processes and is the position taken in this paper. Thorndike (20) and the psycholinguists (17) have emphasized

the hypothesizing and meaning bearing components of the reading process. This view of critical reading as critical thinking has also been emphasized in Ennis' (5) comprehensive critical reading model, which was adapted by Hash (8) to guides that presented dialogues in narrative form on critical issues.

The second view of critical reading followed the work of the Institute of Propaganda Analysis (IPA) in the 1930's (16), particularly the detection of propaganda devices, such as "testimonial" and "name calling." A study by Cook (2) showed that eight to ten-year-old children could identify propaganda devices emanating from television and transfer their learnings to printed material.

A more recent view evolved from the work of the Committee on Public Doublespeak by the National Council of Teachers of English. Doublespeak is described as "the inhumane and dishonest use of language -- deception, dishonesty, semantic distortion" (4:1). Newman (13) identifies two trends that have contributed to the deterioration of language. The first trend reflects language that obscures, obfuscates, and dresses with false dignity, such as the proliferations of euphemisms during the Vietnam War. According to Charles McCabe, columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle:

> Vietnam, which of all things is the thing we Americans most want to hide from, has corrupted our language almost as much as it has corrupted our spirit. . . . To shell your own troops by mistake is 'accidental delivery of ordnance equipment.' A shovel is a 'combat replacement evacuator.' A parachute is, unbelievably, 'an aerodynamic personnel accelerator.' And there is that

> lulu of them all, 'protective reaction.' This means starting a war, as in Laos or Cambodia. (14:43)

The second trend is the use of language as an instrument of change. Again, the Vietnam War played its role in changing the attitudes of many individuals toward language. The prolongers of the distant offensive war represented age, position, experience, and hypocrisy. As a consequence, youth and inexperience decried tradition and wanted change in the establishment. Since language is one clue to political, social, and economic status, the rules of language broke down, and conventional speech was discreditied by many. The popular IPA propaganda classification was rejected by Rank, a contributor to the Doublespeak movement, as not appropriate for contemporary propaganda, and he substituted a two-part schema that emphasized the intensification of language through repetition, association, and compostion and the downplaying of language through omission, diversion, and confusion (15).

The fourth view applies the principles of logic to reading. Four doctoral studies (3, 6, 9, 19) investigating the development of critical reading skills from the primary grades through high school showed that there is a continuing development of critical reading ability from grade two through grade eight, but a plateau is reached in high school. In these studeies, critical reading was described as distinguishing logical from illogical statements. Since critical reading is described as a continum from an analysis of language to a dynamic reorganization of the

self image, all four views are included in the identification and application of the critical reading skills.

SCHEMA OF CRITICAL READING SKILLS

With the end in view of developing self-actualized critical readers, the skills of critical reading are divided into four broad categories: (1) Application of the Principles of Logic to Language, (2) Evaluation of the Tone of Language, (3) Problem Solving, and (4) Development of Insight in Evaluating Language. Subskills are integrated below under the four main components:

I. Application of the Principles of Logic to Language
   - A. Identify the author's logical chain of reasoning.
   - B. Analyze sound and unsound premises and inferences.
   - C. Identify and analyze false analogies.
   - D. Examine and evaluate devices that influence thinking (transfer, name calling, testimonial, band wagon, oversimplification, quoting from context, stacking the cards, etc.)
   - E. Distinguish fact from opinion or fiction.
   - F. Evaluate sources of information (the qualifications of the author, the author's obvious or hidden motives and assumptions).
   - G. Identify the audience for whom the author is writing.

II. Evaluation of the Tone of Language
   - A. Analyze and evaluate the denotations and connotations of words.
   - B. Evaluate the effect of the author's choice of words.
   - C. Identify and analyze the literary forms used by the author (fiction, historical fiction, nonfiction, biography, autobiography, myth or legend, fable, fantasy,

folk tale, etc.)
D. Analyze and evaluate the author's style or literary devices (figurative language, rhythm, symbolism, repetition, allusion, irony, pun, alliteration, personification, sentence and paragraph structure).

III. Problem Solving
A. Identify and analyze a variety of reading materials which represent varying viewpoints.
B. Evaluate the worth of various sources in contributing to the topic of the study.
C. Develop hypotheses.
D. Organize and synthesize data.
E. Test hypotheses.
F. Select alternative courses of action.
G. Evaluate the consequences of alternative courses of action.
H. Draw conclusions based on evidence and logic.

IV. Development of Insight in Evaluating Language
A. Recognize attitudes in the reader that distort comprehension.
B. Develop questioning attitude as the individual reads (predict and read further to check predictions).
C. Recognize areas where the individual lacks sufficient knowledge for forming conclusions.
D. Evaluate ways in which reading influences the concepts, attitudes, and behavior of the reader.
E. Develop inner criteria or monitoring devices for evaluating language patterns.

There is some overlapping in the categories; for instance; the technique of oversimplification can refer to the transfer device as well as the author's sentence and paragraph style.

APPLICATION OF CRITICAL READING SKILLS

A few selected activites representing each of four main categories of critical reading are given below:

I.D. Examination and evaluation of name calling as a device that influences thinking.

1. Presentation of a dialogue in which the character's lines are filled with name calling. Analyze and evaluate the presentation as follows:
   a. What is the name calling word?
   b. What does the word mean?
   c. Who is speaking?
   d. To whom is the word directed?
   e. Is the meaning of the word accurate for the context of the sentence?
   f. How do you think the word made the person feel?
   g. How does the word make you feel?
   h. What was the author's purpose in using the word?
   i. How would you reword the sentence without using a name word? Compare the reworded sentence with the original.
2. Find examples of name calling words in the media and analyze as above.
3. Survey students and ask for their definitions of such words as liberal, stupid, hippy, subversive, capitalist, Communist, etc.
4. Select a moment from a story that portrays name calling and ask questions that elicit empathy and insight.

   Example: "Cemetery Path" by Leonard Q. Ross.

   Empathy: Identification with a character or a situation.

   How do you think the villagers felt when they called Ivan "Pigeon" or "Ivan the Terrible?"

   How do you think the lieutenant felt when he called Ivan these names?

   How do you think Ivan felt when the villagers called him these names?

   Insight: Standing off and looking at ourselves from another's point of view.

   If you had been one of the villagers, would you have called Ivan "Pigeon?" Would you have called him "Ivan the Terrible?" Explain.

   Have you ever been called a bad name? How did you feel when this happened?

   Have you ever called someone else a bad name? Why? How did it make you feel?

II.A. Analyze and evaluate the denotations and connotations of words.

1. Emphasize in context the multiple meanings of words.
2. Identify words that appeal to the senses (visual, auditory, tactile, palatal, olfactory).
3. Peruse newspapers and magazines, identify words of dramatic connotation, and substitute other words.
4. Analyze the associative qualities of brand names, book titles, song titles, names of residential areas, names of restaurants, names of characters in stories, etc.
5. Analyze a choice of advertisements as follows:
   a. Selling points
   b. Special words used
   c. Kind of appeal
   d. Kind of audience
   e. Testable information
6. Note emotional words used in editorials to influence your thinking and rewrite the editorials using more objective language.

III.F.G. Select alternative couses of action and analyze the consequences of courses of action.

1. Present a problem, preferably one suggested by the students, discuss the courses of action to pursue in solving the problem, and the consequences of the courses of action. An example, which arose in a high school reading class follows:
   Problem: The star of the school football team is known by his best friend, the team captain, to have been breaking training by drinking. The biggest game of the year is forthcoming, and the star is needed desperately on the team. Should the captain:
   Directions: Check the courses you think are best.
   a. Confide in the coach and let him decide the course of action.
   b. Say nothing until afterwards for the sake of the game.
   c. Offer the player the choice of stopping his drinking or being kicked off the team.
   d. Tell the player to be sure no one else finds out.

Consequences: Which course is most likely to make this happen? (Write a, b, c or d.)
Desirable or Undesirable (Write D or U on right.)

__1. The boy will be dropped from the team and possibly suspended. __
__2. The coach will think you are a trustworthy student. __
__3. People's opinion of you will change for the better. __
__4. People's opinion of you will change for the worse. __
__5. The boy will stop drinking. __
__6. The Administration finds out that you have known this, and you are severely reprimanded. __
__7. Any other consequence? __

2. Relate courses of action to Kohlberg's stage sequence in moral thinking (10).
3. Present open-ended stories for discussion, allowing students to react, propose alternatives, and make decisions.

IV.D. Evaluate ways in which reading influences the attitudes, concepts, and behavior of the reader.

1. Write a composition on the following:
   Think of the books, stories, poems or articles you have read. Do you definitely remember any that changed your point of view, attitude or behavior? Tell exactly how these books, poems or articles affected your attitude, your ideas or behavior. What specific part of the reading influenced you -- a line or a phrase, the events in the story, the personality of a character, the usefulness of the ideas in your personal life, the beauty of the language or anything else? Give examples or descriptions.
2. Identify and analyze ways in which reading had influenced prominent personalities, past and present.

SUMMARY

An attempt has been made to describe the dimensions of critical reading from a historical and a practical viewpoint and to suggest activities for the development of the mature

reader who has gained insight into the influences of the varying patterns of language on concepts, attitudes, and behavior.

Milgram in his study of the extent to which one person will go in hurting another at the behest of a recognized authority figure concluded:

> A substantial proportion of people do what they are told to do, irrespective of the content of the act and without limitations of conscience, so long as they perceive that the command comes from a legitimate authority (12:24).

He also maintained that the propensity to obey was a "fatal" human flaw that "gives our species only a modest chance of survival" (12:25). If this is so, then it is the responsibility of the teacher to provide experiences that will build in students a critical attitude and promote the development of internal monitoring devices for evaluating the language of author and speaker.

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